



EXPLORING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE THROUGH THE FESTIVALS OF SANTINIKETAN AND SRINIKETAN

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Abstract

The place where we live our entire lives is the greatest gift that nature provides us. We cannot imagine its contribution as it meets our initial needs to keep our life cycle alive. Thus, it is beyond our words to explain the indispensable role of our mother earth. Nowadays, our mother earth is experiencing countless environmental challenges. So it is the need of the hour to adapt a morally upright stand towards the environment by limiting our insatiable desires. Therefore, the love for nature and the education of the globally visionary Rabindranath Tagore are more necessary today than ever. His immense love for nature captivates the whole world. According to him, if a man is totally intermingled with nature as well as, if he apparently feels it, then nature bestows endless love on them. Therefore, he introduced the celebration of each seasonal festival in Santiniketan and Sriniketan to embrace the grace and beauty of Nature. All the cultural events of Visva-Bharati provide a great opportunity for students to develop a man into a true human being. Students can find their true north through their participation in these festivals. If we can sink into Tagore's edifice of wisdom, we can explore the monumental vision he had behind the celebration of seasonal festivals in his dream land, Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Thus, this writing is an endeavor to explore the Environmental Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore through the cultural practices of Visva-Bharati.

Keywords: *Rabindranath Tagore, Environmental Philosophy, Festivals of Santiniketan & Sriniketan*

Introduction

Worshipping to nature is not a new concept. It has been there since time immemorial. History carries enough evidence to show that in ancient time fundamental components of nature were worshiped by pupils, and it is needless to say that natural components sustain our lives through her innumerable gifts. Tagore could envision the utmost importance of nature long ago. Therefore, the celebration of each seasonal festival in Santiniketan and Sriniketan provides the opportunity for students to understand the importance of various seasons on earth as well as their beauty and grace. His affection and attachment for nature direct us to the way to achieve the goal of sustainability through the principle of humanism, universalism, communism, and internationalism. A cultural festival transcends the geographical barriers of diversity in culture, caste, religion, nationality, etc. Tagore wanted Students to feel and explore the different colour and grace of various seasons. Therefore, the seasonal festivals celebrated here play a vital role in enhancing environmental awareness, inculcating values among people and expanding the horizons of safeguarding the earth's fundamental elements. The social, cultural and economic development is associated with this celebration of various seasonal programmes at Santiniketan and Sriniketan. Thus, the cultural events of Santiniketan like Briksharopon, Halakarshan, Barsamangal, Sarodotsav, Silpotsava,

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Poush mela, Magh Mela, Rathindra Mela, Nandan Mela and Basanta Utsav ensure the unity, harmony, love in shaping communities and empower the masses with social responsibility and awareness to resolve different issues in their global surroundings. Accordingly, Tagore introduced various seasonal programmes to nurture the nature for the sake of sustainable living of humankind. In the Modern Curriculum Environmental studies has occupied a lot of space and the policy makers have great concern for enhancing the awareness towards environment where celebrating the natural beauty of various season is the most appropriate method and has the practical significance of establishing the universal bond between students and nature. Students should embrace the seasonal change of nature and it will help to grow love for nature especially when their survival on the earth is a big question.

Briksha Ropon: We are very fascinated with the poetry and lyrics of Tagore but in this heap of degraded environment we should follow his path- breaking, revolutionary, thoughts towards nature. Being a man of the 18th century, he realized the utmost importance of protecting nature by saving the most fundamentals of the planet. He initiated the afforestation programme naming Briksha Ropon festival at the arrival of the monsoon. On the day of his death, Shrabon 22, we remember him by establishing harmony with nature through Briksha Ropon festival. The initiation song of this festival, "*Maruvijayera ketana urao he shunye*" ("raise aloft the banner of the conquest of the desert"), which is a clarion call towards the greenery of earth against deforestation. Students of Visva-Bharati dressed themselves as the most fundamental elements of nature such as 'khsiti' or soil, 'Ap' or water, 'Tejas' or energy, 'Marut' or wind power, 'Vyoma' or space. Which symbolizes we should protect whatever we acquire from nature at all costs. Today world has introduced the Air Act (1981), Water Act (1974), Forest Conservation Act, (1980), Wildlife Act (1972), Biodiversity Act (2002), etc. but Tagore was the actual pioneer of all these acts.



Fig. -1: Briksha Ropon at Santiniketan (8th August, 2023)

Hala Karshan: Tagore always feels that India's development must lie on agriculture. In the year 1928 (Bhabani, S. 2018), the initiation of the Halakarshan festival served as a reminder of the importance of agriculture, which is the foundation of sustaining agricultural practices. Along with that, he wanted to bring agriculture back to the land and encourage us to conduct scientific experiments for the agricultural revolution while also understanding its cardinal values. The famous, heart touching song of this festival 'Fire Chol Matir Tane' evokes thousands of words regarding the same.



Fig.-2: Halakarshan at Sriniketan (9th August, 2023)

Barsha Mangal: According to Tagore if we feel the beauty of each and every season with our heart, we can find ourselves in nature. Especially rainy season holds significant geographical importance for both the earth and mankind. Being profoundly influenced by the wet season, Tagore started the celebration of the rainy season upon its arrival. Every year, Santiniketan welcomes the monsoon with songs, drama, dance, and recitation to uphold the monsoonal significance of the name Barsha Mangal in commemoration of a visionary person, Gurudev Rabindranath.



Fig.-3: Barsha Mangal at Santiniketan (16th august, 2022)

Silpotsava: In the event of Vishwakarma puja, students of Visva-Bharati worship their handicrafts on the altar of the God Vishwakarma and celebrate this auspicious day by performing drama, dance, songs etc. This celebration was dated back in 1941 at the reign of Rathindranath Tagore. After Tagore's demise Visva-Bharati enlisted this Silpotsava in their own academic calendar since 1944. The idea of worshipping artistic products which symbolizes that Karma is equivalent to God. Therefore, in such a way this particular festival reaches the zenith point in the sector of uniqueness. It instills a great message to us that we need to respect and focus on our deeds and actions; this is our 'Dharma' in true essence. As it is the day of the world's Engineer, Vishwakarma, worshipping the handicrafts make us recognize the essential value of industry in our society and we all know that God retains in the shape 'Karma'. This institution abolished the so-called idol worship by promoting this Silpotsava. In this era of industrialization it is very relevant that the masses need to recognize the significance of industry and industrial activities to uplift the society.



Fig.-4: Silpotsava at Sriniketan, Visva-Bharati

Sarodotsava: To embrace autumn warm heartedly once Kabiguru penned two songs on 3rd Bhadra, 1315. Those are—"amra bendhechi kasher guccha, amra genthechi shefali mala" and "amal dhabol pale legeche mondo modhur hawa". After rainy season nature wears majestic attire and we the people are totally mesmerized by its spectacular view. To frame this inexplicable beauty of autumn Gurudev gifted us many literary works especially "Sarodotsav" one of his renowned plays which he presented to commemorate autumn. His deep philosophical thoughts which are embedded in the quintessence of autumn till enrich the heart of everyone. Every year in autumn the students of Santiniketan and Sriniketan celebrate a special festival named 'Sarodotsava', this special festival is on its wheel for two weeks and in this festival pupils display their regards by performing dance, drama, songs etc. His every action and thoughts has the global vision and out of which only the negligible part we can perceive. By performing, participating,

organizing the whole programme students can enhance their analytical skills and they can make a nexus with nature. Students can enrich and enlarge their innovative minds by collaborative cooperative skills. Apart from that, learners of Visva -Bharati can get the chance to test the nectar of the thoughts of Gurudev by performing and watching dramas which are composed by not only Tagore but also other literary personalities.



Fig.-5: Sarodotsava at Natya Ghar, October 2023

Ananda Bazar: The name, 'Ananda Bazar' itself carries its meaning and it is formerly known as Ananda Mela. That means a Bazar with full of joy. On the day of Mahalaya the students, teachers and staffs arrange a bazar at Gour Prangana every year from 3pm to 8pm. Students of various departments make their own stalls to sell different kinds of foods, handicrafts made by their own hand. The Bazar can reach its zenith through assimilation of local people, students, teachers, and staffs. The most important thing is that the whole profit is contributed to the fund for charity.



Fig.-6: Anandabazar at Gour Prangana, (14th October, 2023)

NEP 2020 has given special emphasis on holistic development. To achieve this goal NEP 2020 is ready to take strategic adaptation of applicable methods. In this aspect Santiniketan has already framed this holistic environment by organizing Ananda Bazar on the auspicious day of mahalaya. By arranging this fair students can nurture their critical thinking, collaboration, communication, creativity, - these are recognized as 21st century skills. The fair provides the opportunity to expand their mind and find themselves with their creation, innovation and cooperation .They make their food stall attractive by giving unique names such as 'Dhan siritir tire', 'Monjori', 'Ranga rasana', 'Milky way', etc. They can learn how to communicate with people, how to take responsibility, and obviously understand the spirit of collaboration. They also learn How to live in our environment with our loved ones by sharing love, work, things, effort, kindness, responsibility, attachments, to others. By enhancing this value students realise that we all are tied up in one single thread.



Fig.-7: Departmental stalls at Anandabazar

Rathindra Mela (27th November) & Nandan Mela (1-2 December): There are two separate fairs, organized to commemorate two great personalities one is 'kabi putra' Rathindranath Tagore and other one is great artist Nandalal Bose. These two fairs are organized at Silpa Sadana and Kala Bhavana respectively. On the occasion of Rathindranath's birth anniversary, the students of Silpasadan celebrate it in Sriniketan by giving stall of their handmade artistic products and foods to give utmost respect to the contribution of Rathindranath Tagore. Similarly the students of Kalabhavan exhibit their art and sell it at affordable price before the day of birth anniversary of Nandalal Bose to bow down at the feet of the great artist Nandalal Bose. Students of Kalabhavan get a chance to showcase their creativity, artistic-expression, experiments by making different form of creation, and establish their own uniqueness in the sphere of art and culture. Modern education started giving emphasis to incorporate the art education in their curriculum whereas the organization of Nandan Mela has already given opportunities to the students to execute their cultural enrichment.



Fig.-8: Rathindra Mela (27th November, 2023)



Fig.-9: Nandan Mela (1-2 December, 2023)

Poush Mela (7- 9th Poush): To commemorate the initiation occasion of Debendranath Tagore to brahma, the Poush fair is celebrated each year from 7th poush to 9th poush. It dates back to 1892 (Visva-Bharati, Events Gallery), when the fair was held on the ground located to the north of Brhman Mandir. It is a festival of joy.



Fig.-10: Poush Mela in 2023

Poushmela carries vibrant cultural integration where all communities transcend their boundaries to join to embrace the fair of joy. Regional culture, like Baul, Chhau dance, Kirton, Santali, Fakir gan, etc. all are arranged to intermingle with the diverse culture of our Bengal. Local sellers can get a chance to contribute to socio- economic advancement by selling their products in different stalls at this fair.



Fig.-11: Pop- up stalls at Poush Mela, 2023

Magh Mela or Sriniketan Utsav (6-8 February): It was started first in the year 1328, 23rd Magh (Visva-Bharati, Events Gallery). In every year this fair is organized on 6to 8th of February. Agricultural exhibition is the main attraction of this fair. In this place the farmers from various villages bring their cultivated crops to exhibit their production. The fair is such a kind of place where people get a chance to intermingle with different cultures. By organization of this fair there is a chance for enculturation. Fair acts as a tool for economic and cultural development. This fair provides golden chance to sell handicrafts.



Fig.-12: Magh Mela at Sriniketan 2024

Fig.-13: Exhibition of Agricultural products



Fig.-14: Handicraft Exhibition
(Siksha-Satra,Visva-Bharati)



Fig.-15: Stalls at Magh Mela, 2024

Basanta Utsav: Spring has a special flavor in everyone's mind. It comes to rejuvenate nature after the dry winter. Rabindranath Tagore composed several songs, dramas, to feel the flavor of spring. It was Shamindranath who first celebrated spring at Santiniketan in 1907. Later Basanta Utsav was celebrated at Amrakunja and it was the initiation of this festival. Santiniketan wears a majestic outlook during Basanta Utsav. The songs, poems, dramas which are performed on this auspicious day, these are particularly illustrate the beauty of spring .Pupils can recognize the way spring rejuvenates mother earth. Several quintessential theories and information related to the science of the environment are embedded with the colours of Basanta Utsav. Students can be enriched by several pieces of information through this festival like the song 'dokhin hawa jago jago' asserts the wind direction in this season, south. We can be accelerated by Tagore's creative thoughts by the grace of seasonal festivals in Santiniketan.



Fig.-16: Basanta Utsav at Santiniketan in 2023

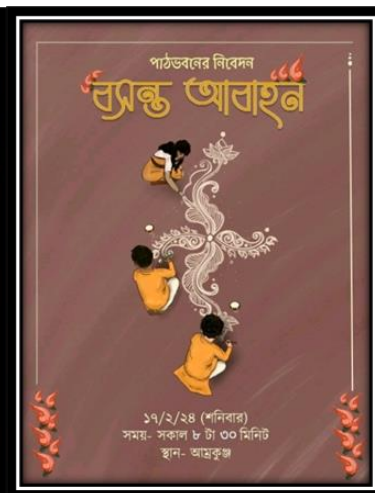


Fig.-17: Basanta Abahan at Patha-Bhavana in 2024

In addition to these festivals the atmosphere of Santiniketan always poised to spread love and joy among the people through its festivities. The landscape of Visva-Bharati ties everyone up with its single thread. This joyous land of Tagore celebrates numerous festivals throughout the year, such as Maharshi Smarana, Republic day, Gandhi Punyaha, Rabindra Jayanti, Rabindra Saptaho, Weekly Upasana, Swadhinata Divas, Convocation, Christotsava, Varsha-Sesh, Nava-Varsha, and many more.

Conclusion

The festivals of this land retain their tradition as a cultural heritage following the ideology of the great visionary person, Tagore, and they appear as a global point of cultural convergence. The eco-friendly environment of Visva-Bharati transforms a man into a holistic human being through its cardinal values. Especially when we are facing the extreme rage of our mother nature, the tradition of Tagore's Santiniketan can be our torchbearer to mitigate the alarming environmental issues. Sustainable values such as harmony, unity, peace, togetherness, collaboration, responsibility, etc. are naturally ingrained in students. In this holistic environment of Santiniketan and Sriniketan, students can broaden their horizons and be prepared for the outer world because, according to Tagore, the education system of the ashram propels us to live a fulfilling life. The insightful vision of Tagore in the cultural practices of Santiniketan and Sriniketan can restore societal sustainability by reducing the emerging social hazards that act as hindrances to overall societal development.

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